

## **WELCOME 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – 2 Easter '19 C**

Revelation 1:4-8 & 17-18

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful that you are all here! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship today...

We live in the blazing light of Easter...Easter is not a day/season but a way of life! Scarcely a week ago we were here shouting He is Risen! (He is risen indeed) back & forth at each other...But I always wonder...were these last 7 days really any different for you than the 7 before that...What's changed? Is your life different? How is Jesus' resurrection victory making all things new in you? Right now?

I suspect I know the answer...but I have good news...

1. Christ *is* risen...and he did that for us. How I might have dropped the ball in the last week failing to live that reality...can't change that reality.

C.S. Lewis said 2. "Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back everything is different?" **THAT** is what the resurrection does for us. The resurrection is a new reality, new life that changes everything...even if what we experience in this world seems to be the same...or getting worse.

When life seems too big & you feel too small, not good enough, inadequate, or that you have somehow disappointed Jesus...or made him mad at you...never forget "*the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead*" (Eph 1:19-20) is in you.

In Christ's presence, by his power, we live the promised journey toward fullness of healing & life and discover a grace that is "*making all things new*" including us.

Living in Christ; means there is nothing too great for God's power to handle or too insignificant for his love to embrace. It's a reality that says from beginning to end, God is in control and his powerful love transforms everything: ...our past...our future...and how we live right now.

We'll explore & experience that together today... we're glad you are here today!

**Let's pray...**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*Heavenly Father...This is the day you have made: & you have filled it with signs of your presence. Your Spirit's breath permeates every moment; & your grace fills each day. Your promises move within us, pulling us toward hope filling us with joy. Receive our thanks. Receive our praise, through Jesus Christ for in his love we know your deep love, your eternal faithfulness, & your unceasing grace. Amen*

## 2 EASTER '19 C – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: LIVING IN CHRIST

### FAITH CHAT:

1. When you think “book of The Revelation” what do you think? Why do you think it’s like that?
2. What would help you appreciate & rejoice in that book like you do John’s other books?

The Revelation to St John...Sadly misunderstood. Sometimes grossly misinterpreted. Incredibly intimidating. Mind-breakingly difficult to understand. Did I miss anything? Absolutely essential as part of the Christian Scripture. We’ll spend the next 7 Sundays...not plumbing its depths, but certainly concentrating on the key central good news themes in that book. **BIBLES**

You’ve heard me say before that the 1<sup>st</sup> century in which Jesus lived/died/rose & ascended...in which the church was born...in which Kingdom of God began to make its presence & power visible through the early disciples...and the 21<sup>st</sup> cent in which we live are very similar...At the very basic level in which you & I live work & play in the very simple human interactions & interplay...1<sup>st</sup> cent/21<sup>st</sup> cent...very much alike.

Despite what people mark on their census forms today just like 90-95 AD, when John received this revelation of Jesus, Christianity (trust in Jesus as God’s personal rescue mission to reclaim his creation for himself/his purposes) was a Minority expression of faith You know I know...at this minute more people in Oz are not in worship than in worship. Tomorrow morning more people will get up do their deal & go to bed & never make reference to anything resembling God or Jesus Christ except perhaps as an expression of surprise or disdain. (¾ of weddings in Oz last year were conducted by celebrants...¼ by religious entity.) You are outnumbered, as a Xn, everywhere you go except here.

Christianity (trust in Jesus as God’s personal rescue mission to reclaim his creation for himself/his purposes) was a minority expression of faith in the midst of a cornucopia of religious beliefs. I can’t remember who said it: “when people stop believing in God they don’t believe in nothing they’ll believe in anything.” While today people believe more things with religious fervour & claim to be irreligious, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century there was a vast array of god-worship...statues temples sacrifices rituals...the highest of which was devotion to the Roman Caesar...*Kaesar et Kurios* Caesar is Lord was the required public confession whether you believed it or not.

And please don’t forget-everybody believes in is devoted to worships something...even self-proclaimed atheists have a “life is all about this”/“most important in life” benchmark...that’s their god.

In the same way, Disciples of Jesus lived a worldview contrary to prevailing culture. If you were going to describe today’s worldview...? It’s all about me. – Me – get what you can can what you get sit on the can – acquire achieve accumulate - my feelings my experience. My truth...Greek/Roman pantheon of gods was in so many ways exactly the same...You chose the one that could help you out in a jam & there were different things you did to achieve different results. Ultimately Caesar is Lord was the language of business...that’s how you got stuff done...No matter what else you believed whatever temple you frequented for any other reason...When you needed a practical matter resolved business/legal/social issue settled the court, judge or bureaucrat needed to see your pinch of salt in the brazier/hear your *Kaesar et Kurios*

But those 2 facts raised 2 critical issues for the early church. Persecution...While scholars can’t agree if that’s why John is writing...to encourage folks who are really under the pump from the Roman Empire (like Peter’s letters) it was clear that Christ-followers were obvious outsiders who became targets for the powers of the world. Their confession, *JESUS IS LORD* was a slap in the face to Caesar & there are stories of about 6000 Christians being crucified in one day because they simply would bend their knee to no other Lord than Jesus...& the Romans just killed them by the 1000s

When the Ottoman Muslim Turks committed genocide against Armenian & Assyrian Christians in Turkey during WWI & killed around 2 million Christians & a coordinated attack killed almost 400 this past weekend in Sri Lanka...& >1000 churches in France were vandalized in some way in 2018...that simply mirrors what Rome did with relentless precision across their Empire. We all assume we’ll never face that sort of threat...but I no longer say that with a straight face...I just don’t know.

At the same time...there was enormous pressure to simply go along to get along. Just like now, Accommodation to culture was one of the biggest threats to the faithfulness of our faith ancestors. The earliest believers lived expecting Jesus would return soon...they didn’t buy green bananas. But 20-30-40 now 60 years into the life of the church, Christians had lost much of the urgency of expectation in Christ’s return. That the scriptures were being compiled at all is a sign that the church finally understood they were in this life for the long haul. So the farther removed they were from the first apostles (& John is the last one standing) & the farther removed they were from that sense of urgency...it was easier to go along/compromise/accommodate

We know that struggle...It is tough to remain in the world but not of it. Engage in normal life & not compromise what you believe just because everyone else is doing something. To maintain a distinctive life of faith & your unique witness to Christ...it's tough...No way would I want to be in high school or uni...tough places for Xns to be.

So the followers of Jesus to whom John writes living in Asia (we call Turkey) really grappled with 2 critical questions... How do we live the new reality of Christ risen & ruling...with a vibrant sense of Determination – hopefulness – unique community & at the same time in Witness to our neighbours (cities) – given all the forces aligned against them? How were they to live faithfully & vibrantly & boldly & unashamedly inviting people to come to Jesus to grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world? What sort of disciples would they need to be & what would they need not so much in their heads but in their hearts to accomplish what Jesus himself had given them to do until he returned? Boy that's a long intro!

John plants in their hearts what I believe the Spirit wants in ours...that then helps us the way it did them live faithfully & vibrantly & boldly & unashamedly inviting people to come to Jesus to grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world Look at vss 4, 5 & 8: *This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Grace & peace to you from the one who is, who always was, & who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; & from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, & the ruler of all the kings of the world...“I am the Alpha & the Omega—the beginning & the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, & who is still to come—the Almighty One.”*

John begins by anchoring the vision he has received – this word from God that has been given to him in dramatic fashion in the One who gave it. John begins by reminding the Xns in Turkey/Wagga that despite what the rulers of this world want us to believe – despite the grim & dire warnings & prophecies from all the public prognosticators: God the Father Reigns. The Sovereignty of God – in Jesus dead/buried/risen/ruling is unassailable. From the first “*let there be...*” in the creation account to “*I AM*” at the Exodus to the manger to the cross to the empty tomb to the final trumpet the Sovereignty of God – in Jesus dead/buried/risen/ruling is unassailable. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace & salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!* God has not retired or fallen asleep at the switch. The hands that formed the galaxies have not been stilled. The voice that called all things into being has not been silenced. THEN:

*All glory to him who loves us & has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. All glory & power to him forever & ever! Amen. Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. Everyone will see him — even those who pierced him. All the nations of the world will mourn (because of) him. Even so! Amen!* Despite what we see as a delay in Christ's return...He will...and when he does we are all Accountable for our lives. We are not masters of our fate or captains of our destiny. We are not unchained from responsibility or culpability. We cannot just do whatever the heck we want. Saved by grace absolutely! Saved for God's purposes saved for God's intentions saved for God's pleasure...without question. All the nations of the world who have heard the good news of this salvation of this shed blood & free gift of life & turned their backs on it saying “none for me thanks” will mourn their lost opportunity the lost joy the lost reunion with the Father.

*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me saying, “Don't be afraid! I am the First & the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever & ever! I hold the keys of death & the grave.”* The Sovereignty of God & our ultimate accountability before him ultimately leads us to & is guided by Unquenchable/Unconquerable Hope. Difficult unpredictable realities of life in a fallen world are guaranteed, but those do not have the final word about us. Our Risen Saviour rules over everything & has brought to an end the last enemy; death. Christ rose from death, reigns in power, & is coming back again, so we can be the most determined, hopeful, joyful, faithful, loving serving generous community on earth. It's not enough to simply survive. We are a river of life-giving water that can help others thrive right here, right now, because we live in victory & daily transformation & the promise that God's work will be brought to its glorious triumphant conclusion in us by the One who has thwarted death & driven the devil straight to his fiery end.

Empowered by that promise...under the Sovereign hand of the Father...knowing the mandate that all nations hear & experience through us the good news...Kate on our behalf went to Indonesia....

(we'll plug Kate's slides in here on Sunday)

Easter dares us as Christians to live lives that make no sense if God has not raised Jesus Christ from the dead & made him Lord. Easter dares us to live lives that are unintelligible if the one who taught us to bless those who curse us & to forgive— even love — our enemies is not the Living Lord. Easter dares us to live lives that take the gospel to every corner of the globe & every house in our street...because Christ lives now & forever.

**Living in Christ**; means there is nothing too great for God's power to handle or too insignificant for his love to embrace. It's a reality that says from beginning to end, God is in control and his powerful love transforms everything: ...our past...our future...and how we live right now.

Let's pray with that in mind... **Father, we rejoice that there is a risen King who rules over all things on earth & in heaven. Thank you that Jesus lives in victory over every enemy & grants us His triumph over sin & death. Hold our hearts steady in your great promises & fix our lives on the hope of life with you forever. By your Holy Spirit make our lives radiant with your good news for the sake of those around us...Through Jesus Christ...Amen**